



City of Evansville

www.ci.evansville.wi.gov

31 S Madison St
PO Box 529
Evansville, WI 53536
(608) 882-2266

Survey on New Pool Designs

For the last 3 years the City has been discussing the possibility of a new pool. The November 2020 ballot will have a referendum for a new pool. We expect the highest possible turnout of Evansville residents in this election, garnering the largest possible voice in support or opposition of said project. It will be the will of the people and their determination of how they want their tax money spent and how much they want to spend. Because the bond will be for 20 years the referendum will be binding. If passed, the construction could happen as soon as fall of 2021, finishing likely in early 2023 and making the increase in debt payment happen on the 2023 tax bill (December 2023).

The pool has been in rough shape due to its age and the type of structure it is, despite the valiant effort of our pool managers. The City did look at every possible way to improve the pool while saving costs. This included only replacing the mechanicals and bath house, installing infrastructure for future expansion (add the slides later), keeping the tub and replacing everything else around it, and more. After the 2019 season showed serious leaks forming in the pool, we determined that all concepts that kept the original tub were not feasible while the financing for incremental improvements also became cost prohibitive over time (higher inflation in construction compared to interest).

You can find the 2017 report and original concepts on the Aquatic Center page http://www.ci.evansville.wi.gov/life_in_evansville/aquatic_center.php. After the pool began leaking significantly we went back to the drawing board last fall and did some sample borings in the ground. This boring was to determine if we had the ability to take a few feet off the hill top to improve access, create more space for the facility and still keep the diving area. If you wish to see the three new design concepts you must participate in the survey regarding said designs <https://polco.us/groups/city/evansville-wi?filter=ongoing>. After the survey closes on June 12th, we will publish all three concepts and the results.

This survey is only on design concepts to get peoples' opinion on what they would like to have in a pool if it is approved by the voters in November. The survey does require the creation of an account for a few basic purposes. First to make sure you participate only once. Two it gives basic information (age, gender and if a registered voter in Evansville) to the City, nothing more. This information is helpful in understanding our responders on a larger scale, not individually. Once you have created the profile you can participate just the once, get notices of other City surveys, or open it up to get surveys from all over. It is your choice when you set up the account. Use of Facebook or other platforms provide far more personal information than what Polco (the survey company) will ever releases to the City.

Since the release of the survey online other questions from the public have come to our attention via social media. Primarily if an indoor pool should be on the ballot. The question on the indoor pool has been discussed at various meetings in the past. During the review of the pool in 2017 the option for an indoor pool was discussed with the architect. By his estimates the costs would be nearly double in construction and it may not fit on the site. An indoor pool would not bring the historic park store building to its full potential as it would remain isolated from the store. Generally speaking, the costs in operations would increase greatly due to the heating of both air and water 24/7/365 with no help from the sun. The long term maintenance costs and capital needs are far higher given what chlorine does to building materials instead of dissipating into the open air. Staffing costs would increase as a manager would be needed as would reliable year round life guards.

I had reviewed our finances and use of our pool and estimated early on that an indoor pool would require a major increase in tax subsidy based on the current operational costs at 3 months a year. In talking with the pool designers we also could expect a change in going to an indoor facility would change services to the public if it was more of a lap lane pool than an aquatic center. Recently I reviewed an indoor pool's finances from the Madison Metro Area. The report showed an average of 6,900 visits per year (including lessons, Physical Education, lap swim and free swimming) earning \$34,300 in revenue annually from 2008-2018. The annual operations and maintenance in that same time frame was \$169,000. While we should not expect the same exact result, the example this facility provides is a sobering reminder of the risk we would take after nearly doubling our construction costs to build an indoor facility.

To expand on this facility's example covering operations and maintenance (not capital) the gate fee would have to be \$24.50 per visit. Even if we tripled the visits as this facility receives it would require an \$8.16 entry fee each time. This rate pays nothing to the 20 annual payments of approximately \$350,000 for the added indoor option over an outdoor pool. Using a lower rate of \$5.00 at the gate the tax subsidy would rise from \$25,000 annually (current subsidy for outside operations excluding the structural/mechanical failure costs as both options would be new facilities) to \$52,200 assuming we triple the annual visits as shown in the other facility's report. Based on this facilities operations at \$5.00 per visit it would take 33,800 visits to balance operational costs with nothing going towards long term capital. This leaves no room for seasonal passes, punch cards or other methods of reducing the entry fee for the most active patron or those of limited means.

In planning and budgeting there are lots of assumptions made to weigh risk. Assuming the best possible outcome is generally unwise and leads to deficits. I estimated earlier on that an indoor pool creates a risk of losing \$100 - 150,000 a year for operations because I could not see 100 people paying \$4 - 6 each day of the week for 50 weeks out of the year for lap swimming. Ultimately an indoor facility would pull more away from the same source of money that goes to parks maintenance, police, fire, and more. An Indoor pool if built is a long term commitment with a substantial financial risk to operations I have strongly advised the committees and Council against taking.

If we keep features like a kiddie pool, slide and more available, the housing around it and outside approach necessary for access would make the existing site unsuitable. If the pool moved offsite it would likely shutter the park store and move the pool to the outskirts of town where many children and young adults on the other end of town may not get rides to attend. To keep it centrally located it would have to be smaller in size leaving only lap swim. The patrons reached by an indoor pool seems lopsided and inequitable to the current summer patrons and made worse when considering the tax impact.

Furthermore to add this much debt by making a pool indoors, the City could suffer a potential drop in credit rating due to exceeding what creditors consider a healthy debt capacity. For a significant period of time new debt for roads or other capital projects (i.e. Liberty Street & Westside Park) would be on hold. These are all the reasons why we did not create a design for an indoor pool.

Committee members, the Council and staff are very concerned about the sticker shock of an outdoor facility and its impact on our capital planning. We are also aware that the life of the current pool (60 years and counting) is nearly at an end. If this referendum does not pass in November, the public should expect a shutdown in the very near future. This is a conundrum to say the least because even the outdoor facility is financially impactful (yet manageable) but we have an obligation to present a way to maintain locally accustomed services in a location most accessible.

We ask that you participate in the survey so we can narrow down a final concept with cost estimates for the November 2020 referendum and fund raising efforts. Currently the range of all three concepts are roughly \$6.5 - \$7,000,000 with the third concept being the cheaper due to the lack of a deep end. This amount includes road repairs and other infrastructure repairs to the park. After taking this survey we ask all the residents of Evansville to participate in the referendum and cast your vote.

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patrick Rigg', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Patrick "Ian" Rigg, MPA
City Administrator/Finance Director